

CHAPTER 43

3 Nephi 18–19

Introduction

During His visit to the Nephites, the Savior instituted the sacrament and emphasized that the purpose of the sacrament is to remember Him. He promised, “If ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you” (3 Nephi 18:11). This same promise is part of the sacrament prayer. While you study 3 Nephi 18–19, ponder what Jesus taught about the sacrament and about prayer and how these teachings can help you deepen your discipleship of Christ so you can more fully enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost.

Commentary

3 Nephi 18:1–14. “This Shall Ye Do in Remembrance”

• The Savior taught that the principal purpose for taking the sacrament is to *remember* Him. We have an opportunity to concentrate on the Son of God during the sacrament ordinance; we should not allow our thoughts to wander or be distracted. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described several appropriate ways to remember the Lord while renewing our covenants through the sacrament:



“We could remember the Savior’s premortal life and all that we know Him to have done. . . .

“We could remember the simple grandeur of His mortal birth to just a young woman. . . .

“We could remember Christ’s miracles and His teachings, His healings and His help. . . .

“. . . We could remember that Jesus found special joy and happiness in children and said all of us should be more like them. . . .

“We could remember that Christ called His disciples friends. . . .

“We could—and should—remember the wonderful things that have come to us in our lives and that ‘all

things which are good cometh of Christ’ (Moroni 7:24). . . .

“On some days we will have cause to remember the unkind treatment He received, the rejection He experienced, and the injustice . . . He endured. . . .

“. . . We can remember that Jesus had to descend below all things before He could ascend above them, and that He suffered pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind that He might be filled with mercy and know how to succor His people in their infirmities” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1995, 90–91; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 68–69).

3 Nephi 18:6–7. The Sacrament and the Administering of Angels

• Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how the ministering of angels is also a part of the promises of the sacramental prayers:

“These ordinances of the Aaronic Priesthood are also vital to the ministering of angels. . . .

“. . . Angelic messages can be delivered by a voice or merely by thoughts or feelings communicated to the mind. . . .

“. . . Most angelic communications are felt or heard rather than seen. . . .

“In general, the blessings of spiritual companionship and communication are available only to those who are clean. . . . Through the Aaronic Priesthood ordinances of baptism and the sacrament, we are cleansed of our sins and promised that if we keep our covenants we will always have His Spirit to be with us. I believe that promise not only refers to the Holy Ghost but also to the ministering of angels, for ‘angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ’ (2 Nephi 32:3). So it is that those who hold the Aaronic Priesthood open the door for all Church members who worthily partake of the sacrament to enjoy the companionship of the Spirit of the Lord and the ministering of angels” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 50–51; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 38–39).

3 Nephi 18:16, 24. “I Have Set an Example for You”

- Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles admonished that whatever our role, we should seek to emulate the Savior’s character as much as we can:

“Each of us plays various roles in family, Church, community, business, education, and so forth. Though we have differing needs, we have in common the need to focus on all Christ’s qualities, especially those which individually we most need to develop more fully. . . .

“We can, of course, stop short and merely adopt a few techniques illustrated by the Savior. But unless we emulate Him as completely as we can, we will have deprived ourselves of the great model. Moreover, our emulation is to be of both style and substance. God’s love underwrites his listening, for instance. Can we conceive of a God who is a nonlistener? Or who is lacking in power? Or who is unwilling to assert Himself on an issue of principle? As we become more like Him it will take place in both attributes and actions” (*A Wonderful Flood of Light* [1990], 110).

3 Nephi 18:18. “Watch and Pray Always”

- President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency reflected on the importance of the commissions to “always remember him” (D&C 20:77, 79) and to “pray always” (3 Nephi 18:18):

“What does the Master mean when He warns us to ‘pray always’?

“I am not wise enough to know all of His purposes in giving us a covenant to always remember Him and in His warning us to pray always lest we be overcome. But I know one. It is because He knows perfectly the powerful forces that influence us and also what it means to be human. . . .

“. . . He knows what it is like to have the cares of life press in upon us. . . . And He knows how our human powers to cope are not constant. . . .

“. . . As the forces around us increase in intensity, whatever spiritual strength was once sufficient will not

be enough. And whatever growth in spiritual strength we once thought was possible, greater growth will be made available to us. Both the need for spiritual strength and the opportunity to acquire it will increase at rates which we underestimate at our peril. . . .

“Start with remembering Him. You will remember what you know and what you love. . . .

“The Lord hears the prayers of your heart. The feelings of your heart, of love for our Heavenly Father and for His Beloved Son, can be so constant that your prayers will ascend always” (“Always” [CES fireside for young adults, Jan. 3, 1999], 2–3, 5; see also “Always,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 8–10, 12).

3 Nephi 18:18. “Sift You as Wheat”

- When Jesus warned the Nephites, “Satan desireth to have you, that he may sift you as wheat” (3 Nephi 18:18), He was teaching the same message He had expressed to Peter (see Luke 22:31).



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Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained Jesus’s words: “This is an idiomatic expression which was clear to the people in that day, more so than to people in our day. In essence and thought content Jesus is saying, ‘Peter, Satan wants you in his harvest. He wants to harvest your soul,

and bring you into his granary, into his garner, where he will have you as his disciple.’ It is the same figure that we use when we say that the field is white, already to harvest. And we go out and preach the gospel and harvest the souls of men. Well, Satan wanted Peter; he wanted to sift him as wheat or to harvest his soul” (*Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, ed. Mark L. McConkie [1998], 127).

3 NEPHI 18:18–21

What instructions did Jesus give here that would improve your prayers?

3 Nephi 18:21. “Pray in Your Families”

- President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) discussed the importance of family prayer: “I feel satisfied that there is no adequate substitute for the morning and evening practice of kneeling together—father, mother, and children. This, more than soft carpets, more than lovely draperies, more than cleverly balanced color schemes, is the thing that will make for better and more beautiful homes” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1963, 127).

3 Nephi 18:26–32. A Sacred Ordinance

- Notice that in 3 Nephi 18:26 the Savior ceased speaking to the multitude and turned to the leaders “whom he had chosen.” His message in verses 28–29 was given to priesthood leaders as a warning against allowing the unworthy to partake of the sacrament. We learn from these verses that members of the Church should leave the responsibility of determining worthiness to partake of the sacrament to those the Lord has called to make such judgments, such as the bishop or stake president.



Minerva K. Teichert, Courtesy of BYU Museum of Art

- While serving as a member of the Seventy, Elder John H. Groberg explained what it means to partake of the sacrament worthily:

“If we desire to improve (which is to repent) and are not under priesthood restriction, then, in my opinion, we are worthy. If, however, we have no desire to improve, if we have no intention of following the guidance of the Spirit, we must ask: Are we worthy to partake, or are we making a mockery of the very purpose of the sacrament, which is to act as a catalyst for personal repentance and improvement? If we remember the Savior and all he has done and will do for us, we will improve our actions and thus come closer to him, which keeps us on the road to eternal life.

“If, however, we refuse to repent and improve, if we do not remember him and keep his commandments, then we have stopped our growth, and that is damnation to our souls.

“The sacrament is an intensely personal experience, and we are the ones who knowingly are worthy or otherwise. . . .

“As we worthily partake of the sacrament, we will sense those things we need to improve in and receive the help and determination to do so. No matter what our problems, the sacrament always gives hope.

“Most of these problems we must work out ourselves. For example, if we aren’t paying our tithing, we simply determine to start doing so. But for some problems, we must see our bishop—the Spirit will let us know which” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1989, 50; or *Ensign*, May 1989, 38–39).

3 Nephi 18:36–37. Jesus Gave His Disciples “Power to Give the Holy Ghost”

- The multitude did not know what the Savior did or said when He touched His disciples and spoke to them; however, Mormon informed us that the disciples testified “that he gave them [the disciples] power to give the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 18:37). Moroni fulfilled his father’s promise to the reader that “I will show unto you hereafter that this record is true” (3 Nephi 18:37) when he later gave an account of this event and the words Christ spoke to the twelve disciples. He further explained that when the Savior touched His disciples to give them authority, He was laying on His hands (see Moroni 2:1–3).

3 NEPHI 19:6–8, 16–17

Why do you think kneeling when possible is an important part of prayer?

3 Nephi 19:9. The Disciples Prayed for the Holy Ghost

- The twelve disciples, whom Jesus had chosen, prayed “that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them” (3 Nephi 19:9). Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained the meaning behind the request:

“There is . . . a difference between the gift of the Holy Ghost and the enjoyment of the gift. All saints after baptism receive the gift or right to the sanctifying power of the Spirit; only those who are worthy and who keep the commandments actually enjoy the promised reward. In practice, members of the Church enjoy the companionship of the Spirit from time to time as they manage, by obedience, to get in tune with the Infinite.

“The actual enjoyment of the gift of the Holy Ghost is a supernal gift that a man can receive in mortality. The fact of its receipt is a witness that the saints so blessed are reconciled to God and are doing the things that will assure them of eternal life in the realms ahead” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 257).

- President Heber J. Grant (1856–1945) spoke of asking God twice a day for the guidance of the Holy Spirit: “I have little or no fear for the boy or the girl, the young man or the young woman, who honestly and conscientiously supplicate God twice a day for the guidance of His Spirit. I am sure that when temptation comes they will have the strength to overcome it by the inspiration that shall be given to them. Supplicating the Lord for the guidance of His Spirit places around us a safeguard, and if we earnestly and honestly seek the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, I can assure you that we will receive it” (*Gospel Standards* [1976], 26).

- President Marion G. Romney (1897–1988), Second Counselor in the First Presidency, stated that we can obtain and keep the Spirit by following a simple four-point program: “If you want to obtain and keep the guidance of the Spirit, you can do so by following

this simple four-point program. One, pray. Pray diligently. . . . Second, study and learn the gospel. Third, live righteously; repent of your sins. . . . Fourth, give service in the Church” (“Guidance of the Holy Spirit,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1980, 5).

3 Nephi 19:10–13. Baptized Anew

- President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) explained why Jesus commanded the Nephites to be baptized again:

“When Christ appeared to the Nephites on this continent, he commanded them to be baptized, although they had been baptized previously for the remission of their sins. . . . The Savior commanded Nephi and the people to be baptized again, *because he had organized anew the Church under the gospel* [see 3 Nephi 19:7–15; 26:17]. *Before that it had been organized under the law* [see 3 Nephi 9:15–22; 11:10–40; 12:18–19; 15:4–10].

“. . . For the same reason Joseph Smith and those who had been baptized prior to April 6, 1830, were again baptized on the day of the organization of the Church” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:336).

3 Nephi 19:18, 22. “They Did Pray unto Jesus”

- There is no place in scripture where we are taught to pray to Jesus. In this unique instance, however, the disciples offered prayers to the Son instead of the Father. Elder Bruce R. McConkie suggested a reason this may have occurred: “There was a special reason why this was done in this instance and on a onetime basis. Jesus had already taught them to pray in his name to the Father, which they first did. . . . Jesus was present before them as the symbol of the Father. Seeing him, it was as though they saw the Father; praying to him, it was as though they prayed to the Father. It was a special and unique situation” (*The Promised Messiah: The First Coming of Christ* [1978], 560–61). It should also be noted that the Savior specifically stated that the people were praying to Him on this occasion because, as He said, “I am with them” (3 Nephi 19:22). Furthermore, on this occasion “they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray” (3 Nephi 19:24).

3 Nephi 19:19–20, 27–28. “I Thank Thee”

• The scriptures give many examples of the Savior expressing thanks to His Father (see Mark 14:23; John 6:5–11; 11:33–35, 41; 1 Corinthians 11:23–24). Upon returning to visit the Nephites a second time, Jesus began His first and second prayers recorded in scripture by thanking His Father (see 3 Nephi 19:19–20, 27–28). Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized this principle:

“Prayer is an essential part of conveying appreciation to our Heavenly Father. He awaits our expressions of gratefulness each morning and night in sincere, simple prayer from our hearts for our many blessings, gifts, and talents.

“Through expression of prayerful gratitude and thanksgiving, we show our dependence upon a higher source of wisdom and knowledge—God the Father and his Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1992, 89; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 64).

3 Nephi 19:20–23, 29. A Prayer for Unity

• Jesus prayed to Heavenly Father for unity among His followers and also for unity among the people His followers taught (see John 17:11, 20–21). Christ also taught the principle of unity in the Doctrine and Covenants: “I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland compared Jesus Christ’s prayer for unity in 3 Nephi 19:20–23 with John 17:11, 20–23:

“From the Savior’s language, we see clearly it is the Holy Ghost that provides such unity, a doctrinal point not so clearly communicated in the New Testament account. Furthermore, it is significant that one of the ultimate evidences God has of our belief in Deity is that we are seen and heard praying. Christ noted this evidence on behalf of the Nephites. To the Father he said, “Thou seest that they believe in me because thou



hearest them’ [3 Nephi 19:22]. . . . It is the key to the miraculous manifestations of heaven and the personal companionship of the Holy Comforter(s)” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 280).

• Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how we may become one with the Father and the Son:

“Jesus achieved perfect unity with the Father by submitting Himself, both flesh and spirit, to the will of the Father. The Savior’s ministry was always clearly focused because there was no debilitating or distracting double-mindedness in Him. Referring to His Father, Jesus said, ‘I do always those things that please him’ [John 8:29]. . . .

“Surely we will not be one with God and Christ until we make Their will and interest our greatest desire. Such submissiveness is not reached in a day, but through the Holy Spirit, the Lord will tutor us if we are willing until, in process of time, it may accurately be said that He is in us as the Father is in Him. At times I tremble to consider what may be required, but I know that it is only in this perfect union that a fulness of joy can be found” (in Conference Report, Oct. 2002, 76–77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 72–73).

3 Nephi 19:24. “They Did Not Multiply Many Words”

• What does it mean to pray and “not multiply many words”? (3 Nephi 19:24). Elder Gene R. Cook of the Seventy gave the following insights:

“When the Nephite disciples were praying in the presence of Jesus, they set a good example for us all. The record says . . . ‘they did not multiply many words. . . .’

“This is consistent with the commandment the Lord gave to the Jews during his mortal ministry. He said, ‘When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.’ (Matthew 6:7; also see 3 Nephi 13:7.)

“When we pray publicly, let us be careful to never be swept away in the desire for the honors of men, which might cause us to pray without real intent or to unnecessarily extend the length of our prayers. The

same caution applies to those who pray for a mortal audience rather than simply to be heard by the Lord. We must always be careful to avoid ‘flowery’ prayers or prayers to impress. Surely the Lord is not pleased with such an approach, nor will he answer the prayers of one who is not focused on the Lord or who prays without real intent” (*Receiving Answers to Our Prayers* [1996], 43–44).

3 NEPHI 19:24–25

What appears to have happened to the disciples in these verses? Compare your answer with 3 Nephi 19:28–29 as well as Moses 1:9–11.

3 Nephi 19:35. Miracles Come to Those Who Have Faith

- Great miracles accompanied the Savior’s visit to the Saints in Book of Mormon times—miracles of healings, angels, shining countenances, prayers too sacred to be written, and many other marvelous manifestations. Jesus declared to His disciples, “So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief” (3 Nephi 19:35).

Do miracles occur today, or has the day of miracles ceased? Elder Dallin H. Oaks taught that miracles still occur; however, we often don’t hear of them because of their sacredness:

“Why don’t our talks in general conference and local meetings say more about the miracles we have seen? Most of the miracles we experience are not to be shared. Consistent with the teachings of the scriptures, we hold them sacred and share them only when the Spirit prompts us to do so. . . .

“. . . Modern revelation directs that ‘they shall not boast themselves of these things, neither speak them before the world; for these things are given unto you for your profit and for salvation’ (D&C 84:73). Another

revelation declares, ‘Remember that that which cometh from above is sacred, and must be spoken with care, and by constraint of the Spirit’ (D&C 63:64). . . .

“Latter-day Saints generally follow these directions. In bearing testimonies and in our public addresses we rarely mention our most miraculous experiences, and we rarely rely on signs that the gospel is true. We usually just affirm our testimony of the truthfulness of the restored gospel and give few details on how we obtained it. Why is this? Signs *follow* those that believe. Seeking a miracle to convert someone is improper sign seeking. By the same token, it is usually inappropriate to recite miraculous circumstances to a general audience that includes people with very different levels of spiritual maturity. To a general audience, miracles will be faith-reinforcing for some but an inappropriate sign for others” (“Miracles” [CES fireside for young adults, May 7, 2000], 3, www.ldsces.org).

Points to Ponder

- How might remembering how you felt when you were baptized improve your experience the next time you partake of the sacrament?
- The disciples prayed “for that which they most desired,” which was “that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them” (3 Nephi 19:9). What do you most desire? Is your desire something you include in your prayers? Why or why not?
- The Savior’s countenance “did smile upon” His disciples (3 Nephi 19:25, 30). What do you think this means? What can you do to allow your countenance to smile upon others?

Suggested Assignments

- Now that you have read several scriptures and other teachings about the sacrament, develop your own plan for making the sacrament a more meaningful part of your life.
- Study the descriptions of the Savior’s prayers in 3 Nephi 19:19–23, 27–29, 31–32. Ponder the principle that these descriptions teach you about improving your prayers. Record your observations and conclusions in your journal.